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NICE Program Begins Again

For Immediate Release
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(June 30, 2005- TROY) The NICE Program- Neighborhood Improvement through Code Enforcement- began its second installment last week in the North Central and southern section of Lansingburgh.

The program aims to improve neighborhoods through targeted code enforcement visits. This year's installment will concentrate on the area from Hoosick Street to 104th Street, from the Hudson River to the Lansingburgh Bike Path. Troy Mayor Harry Tutunjian was the President of the City Council in 2003 when the program was first initiated.

"The NICE program is an innovative program that was brought to us by residents looking for a solution to the absentee landlord puzzle," Tutunjian said. "The program worked better than most thought it would, and we were pleasantly surprised with the positive results. If the program can be nearly as successful in the upcoming neighborhoods, that would be very exciting."

The theory behind the NICE program is simple and results oriented. Over the course of the summer, the South Lansingburgh/North Central area will have a Code Enforcement officer dedicated solely to the area. More than 600 properties will be inspected. Following the original inspections, the City will speed up the enforcement process and notify property owners of all violations.

Landlords that have exterior violations are given 30 days to begin the repair, cleaning, or painting work that is needed for the building to be brought up to code. Because of the early start date of the program nearly all of the building should have code violations fixed by the early fall.

Property owners who fail to respond to City notices of violation will be ticketed after 30 days, brought to Code Enforcement Court, and be fined appropriately. District 3 City Councilman Art Judge, who represents the Beman Park area that was the test case for the program, said he heard nothing but positives from longtime residents of the City.

"Over the past four years this City Council has taken numerous approaches in tackling the absentee landlord and irresponsible property owner problem that started to plague the City," Judge said. "Through these different programs we have not only begun to fix the problem, but we have sent the message that we will not be a dumping ground for people looking to make a quick buck."

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The NICE program is funded through the Community Development Block Grant program, which Troy recently changed the focus of under Tutunjian's new 5-year Consolidated Plan. The new program will focus on leveraging economic opportunity, improve neighborhood livability, and creating decent housing.

"Clearly this program fits all three of the major goals set forth in the new 5-year Consolidated Plan," Tutunjian said. "This area of the City was overlooked for too long, and we are slowly starting to change the climate there. We believe this program will spur even more change, and firmly feel it is an outstanding way to deal with a tough problem during a time when fiscal remedies to issues are difficult to come by."